



Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Division of Environmental Health, Food Safety and Sanitation Program

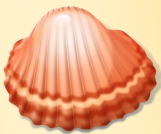
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Classification of Commercial Shellfish Growing and Harvest Areas

Purpose:

Before shellfish can be grown or harvested for commercial sale, the area must be assessed by DEC to determine that shellfish can be safely grown or harvested.



What are "shellfish"?

Shellfish are all edible species of oysters, clams, mussels, and scallops, either shucked or in the shell, fresh or frozen, whole or in part. Scallops are excluded when the final product is the shucked adductor muscle only.



Water Testing

Growing waters must be tested and meet fecal coliform standards in the NSSP.

The first step is to determine the area boundaries:

The operator will submit a request in writing to classify a shellfish growing area already approved by DNR and ADFG Mariculture program. DEC will initiate the classification work when the request is received and a one time fee is paid. Shellfish can only be harvested and sold into commerce from a classified area approved by DEC.

The boundaries of a wild harvest or an aquaculture area are established by considering the natural topography, sources of natural contamination, industrial developments or human habitation, and potential for additional growing or harvesting sites within the area.

Next, the potential contaminants are identified:

This information is determined through:

- Recreational use of the area ADFG shellfish inventory studies;
- State of Alaska Aquatic Farm Applications; or
- Information provided to DEC by individuals seeking to classify areas for harvest.

DEC must determine the potential impacts of contaminants on water quality in the area, seasonal restrictions if any, location of water sampling stations, and sampling frequencies. This is accomplished by conducting a shoreline survey, evaluating the following information, and preparing a sanitary survey report which summarizes this information:

- Proposed boundaries and topography
- Presence of anadromous streams, wild animals, or resident and migrating bird populations
- Tides, rainfall, winds and river discharges
- Location of human habitation or industrial developments
- Fisheries
- Recreational use of the area

The growing water must be tested:

Shellfish growing waters must meet the fecal coliform standards in the NSSP. So, water samples from growing areas must be tested. The sampling period should encompass various environmental conditions including the wet and dry weather, low and high tides and periods of harvest. The duration of the study is usually 12 months or longer.

The number of sampling stations will depend upon the size of the area, and the presence or absence of each of the actual or potential sources of contamination. Generally, they are located at:

- The growing/harvesting area
- Between each actual or potential source of contamination and the shellfish
- The boundary lines

Shellfish permit applications are available online:

http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/forms/forms_home.html

Who should I call if I have questions about Shellfish Processing?

Call: George Scanlan,
Shellfish Specialist
(907)269-7638
or email:
george.scanlan@alaska.gov



Shellfish Processing Regulations:

All shellfish processors must comply with Alaska's Seafood Processing and Inspection Regulations, and the standards for fresh or frozen shellfish relating to sanitation, harvesting, handling, shucking, and transporting contained in the **National Shellfish Sanitation Program Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish** (NSSP) and 21 CFR 1240.60 (Control of Communicable Diseases: Molluscan Shellfish).



The number of samples per station depends upon the presence of pollution sources having an impact on water quality, including human habitation at the growing/harvesting area:

- Areas with no human habitation will require a total of fifteen (15) samples per station over a sampling period to be determined by DEC.
- Areas with human habitation will require a total of thirty (30) samples per station over the sampling period.

Results from all sampling stations over the sampling period must have both a geometric mean not to exceed 14 fecal coliforms/100 ml, and no more than 10% of the samples can have greater than 28 fecal coliforms/100ml.

Water quality samples can be taken by an operator through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DEC. The Operator bears the cost for getting the area classified.

Area Classification, and an operational status assigned:

The Sanitary Survey Report will **classify** the area as one of the following:

- **Approved**
- **Conditionally Approved**
- **Restricted**
- **Conditionally Restricted**
- **Prohibited** - All areas not classified; adjacent to a sewage treatment plants; and areas with unacceptable fecal coliform or biotoxin levels.

The Status of the growing area is separate from the classification. It is designated as one of the following, and may change during a harvest period:

- **Open** Shellfish may be harvested subject to its classification
- **Closed** - Result of sewage spill, biotoxin levels or emergency closure by DEC
- **Reopened** - Emergency abated, fecal coliforms, biotoxin levels or other contaminants returned to acceptable levels
- **Inactive** – when shellstock is suspended or no longer occurring up to 5 years. Sampling may be reduced to twice annually.
- **Remote** - Lack of human habitation, not impacted by actual or potential pollution source.
- **Seasonally Remote** - Same as Remote except a closure period is defined. One sample required before re-opening.

All classified areas must be re-approved annually, triennially and every 12 years. Water samples must be collected from each sample station according to the sampling plan. Water quality reports are prepared to document that the classification criteria are being met.

FEES: Initial Classification one time fee **\$500.00 in addition to** Annual Re-approval **\$150.00** per visit

The required annual sampling frequency for approved areas is as listed :

- Areas with human habitation require five water sampling events per year
- Remote areas require two sampling events per year
- Seasonally Remote areas require two sampling events per year, one sample required before re-opening.

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